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Approved For Release 2002/08/21 : CIA-RDP80-01065A000300070038-7

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April 16, 1952

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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS PLAN¹

for the

EXPLOITATION OF STALIN'S PASSING FROM POWER

(CODE NAME: "MIDRIB")

- 1 It is stressed that this is meant to be a flexible, constantly under review, guide to profitable action and not a rigid, unchanging directive.

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SECTION I

PROBLEM

To exploit Stalin's passing from power¹ and the related problems of succession in order to gain the most therefrom in support of approved U. S. objectives vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

1 In this paper the phrase "passing from power" and "Stalin's death" are used synonymously.

SECTION II

APPLICABLE APPROVED POLICIES

As set forth in:

A. NSC 20/4 "U. S. Objectives with Respect to the USSR to Counter Soviet Threats to U. S. Security," November 23, 1948.

especially paragraphs:

- 19a. "To reduce the power and influence of the USSR to limits which no longer constitute a threat to the peace, national independence and stability of the world family of nations."
- b. "To bring about a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia, to conform with the purposes and principles set forth in the UN Charter."
- 20a. "To encourage and promote the gradual retraction of undue Russian power and influence from the present perimeter areas around traditional Russian boundaries and the emergence of the satellite countries as entities independent of the USSR,"
- b. "To encourage development among Russian peoples of attitudes which may help to modify current Soviet behavior and permit a revival of the national life of groups evidencing the ability and determination to achieve and maintain national independence."
- d. "To create situations which will compel the Soviet Government to recognize the practical undesirability of acting on the basis of its present concepts and the necessity of behaving in accordance with precepts of international conduct, as set forth in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter."
- 21e. "To place the maximum strain on the Soviet structure of power, and particularly on the relationships between Moscow and the satellite countries."

B. NSC 58/2 "U. S. Policy Toward the Soviet Satellite States in Eastern Europe," December 13, 1949.

"As the most feasible course of action available at this time, the United States should attempt, by methods short of war, to disrupt the Soviet-satellite relationship and bring about the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of preponderant Soviet power and influence from Eastern Europe."

"Endeavor to cause an increasing isolation of the confirmed Stalinists from the nationalist elements of the Communist Party and from popular support in the satellite states toward the end that their power will be reduced."

C. NSC 68 "U. S. Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950. Restates the provisions of NSC 20/4.

D. State Department Paper "U. S. Attitude Toward a Possible Liberated Russia," January 16, 1951.

attitude

This paper is based on the primary thesis that the present Soviet regime will either collapse or be overthrown as a result of internal or external pressures or a combination of them both. Assuming that the "cold war" position of the U. S. and the Free World vis-a-vis the Soviet Union does not materially change within the next decade the only substantiation for use of the policies and objectives stated in the paper is to cause the death of Stalin to generate enough internal pressure to create such chaotic conditions that the present regime will either collapse or have to make such concessions that the present form of government will not be able to exert the authority the regime presently possesses.

1. To introduce a democratic system which will guarantee internal order, repudiate ambitions of national aggrandizement, ensure participation in normal international intercourse, and develop Russian resources for the benefit of the country and its peoples.

2. To reduce the police power to constitutional limits consistent with the enjoyment of individual freedoms including ingress to and egress from Russian lands for Russians and foreigners in accordance with generally recognized international practice.

3. A federal system which while recognizing and preserving the economic interdependence of the components of the present system grants a substantial measure of political and constitutional autonomy to the non-Russian nationalities.

As to the nationality issue based on the primary consideration of rallying all anti-Soviets in the struggle (armed conflict?) against the Kremlin the paper suggests our best course of action.

1. To establish a representative form of government in Russia with firm guarantees of individual freedoms, but leaving the solution of the nationalities question to plebiscites to be conducted among the various minorities under some form of international supervision.

Statement of Aims

It is also necessary to formulate a statement of U. S. aims for a future liberated Russia which could be proclaimed to the world and particularly to the peoples of the Soviet Union on the event of a general conflict.

1. Overthrow the Bolshevik tyranny;
2. Liberate the victims of MVD terror;
3. Land to those who work it, job choice to the workers;
4. Freedom from Stalinist oppression;
5. Self-determination for the nationalities;
6. Welcome for the Soviet peoples within the family of nations.

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SECTION III

GENERAL SUMMARY AND ANALYSISDiscussion

1. Severe strains and tensions are believed to exist in the Soviet system despite its apparent unity and strength. U. S. policy should be designed to exploit both the normal tensions and any intensifications thereof which may arise at certain critical points. A study of possible crises indicates that it is well-nigh impossible to deal with MIDRIB as an isolated plan. Careful thought shows that while MIDRIB deals specifically with the problems of succession and the strains inherent in a dictatorial regime when a transition of power control is to be made, it is but one of several possible crises in the Politburo (due for example to a Kirov-type assassination) which would involve the same or similar strains. While this is being studied as a special case, it is essential that the possibility of other cases be noted and that it be realized that this study, with appropriate modification, might be applicable to similar crises regardless of the precipitating causes.

2. Although there is some disagreement in the member departments and agencies of PSB as to the likelihood of the occurrence of an exploitable crisis at the time of Stalin's passing from control, the majority opinion holds such a crisis will occur. Those who believe a crisis is improbable base their opinion on a belief that the internal power distribution of the Soviet Union is such as to force the Politburo, regardless of power struggles, to maintain equilibrium. Those who believe a crisis probable maintain that the individual drives for power and survival will force a struggle regardless of the above. All agree that carefully planned action on the part of the U. S. increases the likelihood of such a crisis.

3. In contributing toward a crisis, the present over-all aims of

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the U. S. must be borne in mind. In particular, any crisis which might force the USSR to plunge into a global war is neither desired nor profitable.

4. At present it appears that Stalin's passing from control and the related problems of succession are more likely than any other development, except major war which we desire to avoid, to lead to a serious internal crisis which might be exploited in support of U. S. policy. Such a crisis may well present the U. S. with an opportunity for major gain in its current cold war effort. All plans and operations should be formulated with the above paragraphs in mind.

5. It is further felt that if this plan is to be really effective, if it is to contribute to the unseating of the present regime and replacing it with one more acceptable to the United States, certain recognized policy decisions and attitudes are involved. These attitudes are not necessarily firm or binding statements of U. S. policy but they provide a position within which operators can provide a consistent answer to those with whom they must deal, while the U. S. retains considerable latitude as concerns a final policy decision. Briefly, these problems and what are believed to be approved answers thereto, as derived from the Department of State paper of 16 January 1951, "U. S. Attitude Toward a Possible Liberated Russia," are listed below:

a. What do we wish to do in case such a crisis does occur?

Answer: Every effort will be made to exploit such a crisis; however, actions should be avoided that would give any faction a valid claim that the U. S. was interfering in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. We will undoubtedly look with favor upon a ~~genuine~~ ^{my} liberation movement which gives ~~any~~ ^{such} hope of furthering our aims. If a ~~genuine~~ ^{be} liberation movement does not appear, the situation will have to be appraised as it develops in order to determine what issues, if any, offer favorable opportunities

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for specific actions or attitudes on our part.

b. Definition of certain U. S. objectives to the degree that prior to achieving a crisis we may answer certain questions of those groups ^{which} ~~whom~~ we desire to ^{exploit?} ~~manipulate~~. These questions, which concern the future of a liberated Russia, include specifically the following: *a new way.*

(I) Internal Affairs

- (a) The nationality problem
- (b) The land reform problem
- (c) Others

Answers to these questions are generally given in the State Department paper referred to above. Briefly, the U. S. position on the nationality problem is one of self-determination; just so that the governments formed, are not inimical to the continuance of our own existence. The land reform problem is regarded as an indigenous problem which must be solved by the people who are tilling the land. The traditional U. S. attitude is that he who tills the land should own it and while we will not force this decision on anyone, we will provide, to the extent practicable at the time, an atmosphere in which such decisions can be made free of duress.

(II) U. S. attitude concerning territorial integrity toward Russia.

Answer: Generally, it may be stated that although the principle of self-determination applies, the U. S. would be unfavorably disposed toward any attempt to reduce by forceful partition the territorial limits of the USSR below those of pre-World War II USSR.

(III) U. S. attitude toward a future balance of power in Europe vis-a-vis Russia.

Answer: This problem cannot be settled until the factors involved become more tangible and predictable than they are at present. The requirements of our allies, as well as ourselves, should be kept in mind as the situation develops, with the minimizing of future wars as a governing criterion.

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6. In the exploitation of any crisis which may overtake the USSR, the decisive power factors will be the military, the police, and the Communist Party. These should receive special study, and our plans as to what we wish to achieve in such a crisis must be made in light of the above. Unfortunately, there is little but speculative intelligence available as to the possibilities of our using any of these instruments or the personalities that control them. A fact that must be borne in mind is that any premature indication of U. S. support to any person or group could be a de facto death warrant. This, of course, is a double-edged weapon and one which could well be tested now.

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SECTION IV

PHASE I

1. To orient a portion of the overt and covert activities in the field of psychological operations and to direct possible overt acts of the U. S. Government to maximize the psychological strains inherent in the certainty of Stalin's passing from power in order to gain the most therefrom in support of approved U. S. objectives vis-a-vis USSR.

Conclusions

2. In light of the foregoing, it is believed that the U. S. Government should, in the execution of Phase I of this plan, embark upon a concerted effort to achieve maximum, divisive results between members of the Politburo, ~~and~~ the major instruments of power, and the people who control them; that the policy attitudes mentioned in paragraph 5 of Section III above be scrutinized by PSB and the Department of State and if consistent with ~~our approved policies~~ *other attitudes* they be approved.

3. Instructions be issued to overt agencies in the field to strongly slant U. S. output to the USSR and the satellite areas in such fashion as to maximize the strains inherent in this stated problem; and that the general line to be followed in this slanting conform ~~roughly~~ *generally* to the following outline:

a. It should be emphasized that all the evils which are found in the system of government presently in control in the Soviet Union are personified in Stalin and the question asked whether or not the system will permit the selection of a successor to Stalin who can or will correct these evils. What successor might even give hope for relief? (A comparative weakling such as Molotov?) In connection with the above, some of the more vulnerable facets of the Soviet regime are listed below:

(1) Intellectual and Spiritual Enslavement

- (a) The historical achievements and truths as well as accomplishments in the field of arts and sciences --

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truly proud heritages of the peoples of the Soviet Union -- have been repeatedly amended, misinterpreted, prostituted, or eliminated at the whim of Stalin or the Party. Only that which can be identified with Stalin or which can be dialectically prostituted to glorify Stalin or the Party is allowed to remain in what constitutes the cultural basis of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Thus, the peoples of the Soviet Union are constantly robbed of their traditions, codes of conduct, history, and achievements.

(b) Suppression of Religion

(2) Deprivation of personal liberty (Slave Labor)

(3) Deprivation of the fruits of their toil

(a) Crushing taxes

(b) Planned low standard of living

(c) Collectivization

4. Questions and doubts should be raised in the light of past history with respect to the effects of Stalin's passing from power in all strata of the Communist world, e.g.:

- a. Will Malenkov-ism, Beria-ism, etc. follow Stalinism?
- b. Will a purge of enemies of the present heir-apparent follow?
- c. Will there be changes in the Communist Party? In the Army?
- d. Will the successor to Stalin try to outdo his predecessor and thereby increase the hardships of the people under Kremlin domination?
- e. Are changes and/or developments now taking place as a result of the heir-apparent's actions and plans for the future?
- f. Is this to be another "time of troubles" for Russia?
- g. Will Stalin's death save mother Russia?

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h. Will Stalin's successor see to it that Russians are given the peace, freedom and an abundant life which can be had now, instead of political promises for the remote future?

5. Follow the same general scheme above with suitable modifications in all areas outside the USSR.



7. It is recommended that the Department of State and CIA be directed to prepare operational plans in support of the above and submit them for information and coordination to PSB.

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SECTION V

PHASE II

1. To exploit the crisis which may be engendered by Stalin's death in the interests of the U. S.

Conclusions

2. In the light of the general summary and analysis in Section III above, it is believed that the U. S. Government should, in the execution of Phase II of this plan, pursue the following course:

a. Have a specific study made to develop whatever intelligence sources can be found on possible splits or trends in the Politburo. (A memorandum with specific recommendations is to be forwarded by PSB on approval of this paper to the appropriate authorities, ~~to be made~~.)

b. That on the death of Stalin no official word of condolence or sympathy be given by the U. S. and that the President make a brief statement to the effect that no such statement should be made by any governmental body.¹

✓ c. That the U. S. should have in readiness a proposal of the first magnitude to place before the UN outlining a plan for peace, disarmament, atomic control, and economic progress. This plan will outline the U. S. position vis-a-vis USSR with special reference to the Soviet Armed Forces. This plan should be submitted to the UN immediately upon

- 1 The panel has considered the view ^{that whether} ~~as to when~~ the U. S. should underline its feelings toward the government in power in the USSR by making the most bare and unsympathetic statement protocol demands. The panel feels this is an unreal and unwise mingling of classic diplomacy with the situation which had best be dealt with otherwise; that the psychological loss which would be inherent in any gesture on the part of the U. S. which could be construed as approval of Stalin's regime or lending the taint of legitimacy to his successor would far outweigh any possible gains.

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the first firm evidence of Stalin's passing from power.

d. That in the following order, test cases be run by CIA to test the validity of the last statement in paragraph 6 of Section III:

- (1) ~~Malenkov - *Bogdanov (Min of Defense)*~~ BULGANIN
(2) Malenkov

e. That a Watch Committee, composed of one member from the Department of State, CIA and Defense, and chaired by PSB, be established to survey the plan periodically and insure that operational planning in support thereof shall be properly executed and coordinated.

f. That the Department of State, CIA and Defense be directed to prepare coordinated, operational plans in support of the above and submit them for information and coordination to PSB.

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SECTION VI

ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The establishment of a Watch Committee - Director of PSB.
2. Chairing of Watch Committee - Assistant Director for Coordination for PSB.
3. Intelligence tasks - Deputy Director, CIA.
4. Preparation of Operational Plans - Deputy Director, CIA; Department of State; Department of Defense.
5. Review of Plans - Assistant Director for Plans for PSB.